Turkish Diasporic Responses to the Taksim Square Protests: Traditional and Social Media Uses in Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany

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Abstract

The Gezi Park movement which enveloped Turkey in the early summer of 2013 provided another opportunity for examining the role played by social media during times of mass social upheaval. Based on an offline and online survey of 967 people of Turkish origin living in these countries, we will test how traditional and social media has influenced the participation of the members of the Turkish diaspora in Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands in the protests in Istanbul's Taksim Gezi Square. This study will also investigate how living in Europe can influence the behavior and attitudes of the sampled individuals from the Turkish Diaspora of Germany, Belgium and Netherlands in the time span when the Taksim Gezi Park demonstration took place. Our results make it clear that social media was used by those who supported the protest movement, while those who opposed the protest movement primarily used or followed traditional sources of media, including Turkish and European television. Furthermore, supporters amongst the diaspora for the Gezi-protests were primarily active in accruing social capital through bonding and social networking among those who belong to the Turkish diaspora under the guise of the Gezi park protests. Finally, a significant number of the supporters of the protests in the three countries took part in several different means of supporting the movement, including: disseminating awareness about the Gezi protests through social media, engaging in meetings, and in some cases, even cutting off contact from friends and acquaintances whom did not share their support for the protest movement.

Keywords: Turkish Diaspora; Gezi Movement; Social media; Social capital; Social activities; Social relations

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1. Introduction

Civil protests and alternative forms of participation are gaining popularity and are often seen as signs of democratic health (Norris, 2002). While some Internet researchers demonstrate the empowering potential of online social media, there are commentators who find it naive to believe in their politically liberating power (Gladwell, 2010; Jones, 2011; Coenen et al., 2012). Turkey's restrictive Internet policies and surveillance legislation are examples of a regime bent on thwarting their revolutionary potential (Akdeniz, 2010; Krajeski, 2010). The protests that began in Istanbul's Taksim Gezi Square in May 2013 and the use of traditional media and social media in the relations between civil society and the state are central in this study. We identify the mechanisms that led members of the Turkish diaspora in Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands to engage in or stay away from this social movement taking place far from their European homes.

According to Tilly (2004) protest is primarily perceived through the media in terms of 'worthiness', 'unity', 'numbers', and 'commitment' (WUNC); these are the defining elements of social movements and the basic concepts for measuring their strength. The higher the protest scores as determined by police or other official sources on these characteristics, the higher their impact (Lohmann, 1993). In concrete terms, *many* participants making *worthy* claims, sharing *common* symbols and goals, and *committed* to resist repression, are more likely to be successful. The chapter will further elaborate on these 'WUNC' characteristics, applying them to the Gezi Protests as seen by 'members of the Turkish diaspora' in Western Europe.

Generally speaking, this study provides some concrete evidence on the role of social media in a social movement from the perspective of a diaspora's engagement. It is based on an offline and online survey of the attitudes and behaviors of members of Turkish diasporic members in Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany during the Taksim Gezi Park protests in the early summer of 2013. Owing to the impossibility to locate a random sample of participants with Turkish ethnicity, we used a variety of online and offline recruiting tools to reach potential respondents. Participation in activist forums was not required for survey completion as we solicited both respondents who actively participated in the protests and those who were opposed to such protests. In all, 976 questionnaires were completed.

This research further operationalizes the 'social capital' concept in the context of social media being used for political mobilization, by looking at both bridging and bonding social capital (Ellison et al., 2011). We investigate whether or not the 'group' under scrutiny accrued communication-generated social capital through the use of traditional and social media. The study will introduce this concept to the literature on social capital, which may lead to other opportunities (e.g., sense of (be)longing, community feeling). In addition to the examination of social capital during a time of intense focus on the country of ethnic origin by a group of European residents or citizens, this study also examines the European context for respondents' attitudes and behaviors.

In Gezi Park people belonging to diverse ethnic, religious and economic communities came together and constructed platforms to fight the government's authoritarian tendencies. Protestors were met with tear gas, plastic bullets and water cannons, whereas in the more liberal European environment a space was provided in which supporters and opponents of the movement were free to express their opinions, both in the streets and in formal forums. As a result, the social movement continues unabated in Europe, while it has been largely silenced or physically crushed in Turkey. Our study examines these contrasting situations.

2. Context for the study

On the morning of May 13, 2013 people in Turkey witnessed the largest civil unrest in the country's recent history. On May 28, some 50 activists gathered in the Taksim square to protest an urban development plan that called for the destruction of Gezi Park, which is an urban park situated next to Taksim Square, in Istanbul's Beyoğlu district, and its replacement with a shopping mall in a faux Ottoman-style "military barracks" (Yuksek, 2014). After a few days, the small environmentalist protest escalated into a countrywide uprising against Prime Minister Erdogan's government owing to its confrontational approach towards protesters, including liberal use of tear gas, water cannons and "harmless" plastic bullets by the police as well as national media censorship. Out of a population of eighty million, an estimated three and a half million Turkish people actively took part in almost 5,000 demonstrations across the country; eleven people were killed and more than 8,000 were injured (De Bellaigue, 2013).

According to an online poll by Istanbul Bilgi University, 91.3% of respondents said they became involved in demonstrations because of the prime minister's authoritarianism, with a similar percentage indicating they were protesting police violence. The third reason for the demonstrations was the violations of democratic rights (91.1%) followed by the 'silencing of the media' (84.2%) (Yuksek, 2014). Mainstream national television channels, both public and private, either refused to cover the demonstrations or under-reported the scale of the events (Yuksek, 2014). Under extreme government pressure both print and broadcast media chose self-censorship. The authorities forced the journalists reporting on the actual situation to resign. As a consequence, protesters launched a Twitter campaign calling for the population to turn off their television sets, with the #BugünTelevizyonlarıKapat (literally, 'turn off the TVs today') hashtag being retweeted more than 50,000 times (Devitt, 2014).

Out of outrage with the silencing of the mainstream media, new online media platforms emerged that played an important role in providing a more accurate description of events and raising public awareness in real time. In other words, they supplied a significant communication function for the exchange of ideas and the formulation of collective public opinion, enhancing citizens' ability to organize and tell the country and the outside world about the events (Barberá and Metzger, 2013). In contrast to the 'Arab Spring' uprisings, which garnered huge international interest, social media activity during the Taksim Gezi Park protests indicate a clear national focus. For example, only three out of ten tweets relating to events in Egypt were posted by those on the ground, whereas approximately nine out of ten tweets relating to Gezi Park were posted from Turkey, with a similar proportion of tweets being written in Turkish. About half of the tweets were located to Istanbul specifically, further suggesting that the target was a Turkish audience and not global publicity (Devitt, 2014; Varol et al., 2014).

Participation in the social media campaign was not just confined to Turkey, however. Tweets flooded in from all over the world about the Gezi Park protests, out of which nearly 15% of the tweets were from other countries (Varol, et al., 2014; Barberá, 2013). The Gezi Park protests received both support and opposition from members of the Turkish diaspora, with others choosing to remain silent. Many 'offline' activities, such as street demonstrations, took place across the globe in support of the Gezi Park protesters. These activities supplemented online activities that intended to increase awareness among the diaspora. Diasporic involvement was

notable in Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany, three countries with a sizeable Turkish minority and characterized by similar shifts in the immigrant-receiving policy: first adhering to an exclusionist model, then shifting towards a multiculturalist model in the 1980s, to evolve towards an integration-oriented model in the 1990s, and more recently taking a more assimilationist turn (see Entzinger, 2014; Loch, 2014; Jacobs and Rea, 2007). Although national differences exist between them, it is fair to say that the three countries under study have gone through all of these shifts to a lesser or greater extent. This mixed response to the Gezi protest movement provided an exciting opportunity to research the involvement of diasporic activism in political changes in 'the old country' as well as the affinities with Turkey and people from Turkey.

2.1. Understanding the Taksim Gezi Park protest as a social movement

Charles Tilly (2004, 2006) introduced WUNC as an acronym to describe social movements, in reference to the participants' and their constituencies' public representations of 'worthiness', 'unity', 'numbers' and 'commitment'. According to Tilly 'worthiness' refers to, among others, presence of clergy, dignitaries and mothers with children. Indicators of 'unity' would be matching badges, headbands, banners, or costumes, singing and chanting. 'Numbers' refer to headcounts, signatures on petitions, messages from constituents, people taking to the streets, and 'commitment' would consist in braving bad weather, visible participation by the old and people with disabilities, resistance to repression, ostentatious sacrifice, subscription, and/or benefaction. Tilly argues that only the movements that are mostly involved with the display of worthiness, unity, numbers and commitment should rightly be called 'social movements'. Although the Gezi Park protests initially demonstrated high levels of all four characteristics, the 'unity' and 'commitment' of the movement diminished noticeably as it lost impetus and individuals were drawn to return to their daily lives (Ankur, 2013). However, there were serious reasons for this—notably the threat of bodily harm from the police (both in uniform and undercover) and of imprisonment. Also, people were encouraged to report their neighbors to the authorities if they witnessed them undertaking any actions that would support the demonstrations (banging pots or hanging banners/flags).

The 'social movement repertoire' is one of the elements through which Tilly describes 'combinations of different forms of political action, such as vigils, rallies, demonstrations, petition drives, statements to and in public media, and

amphleteering'. Applied to the Gezi Park movement, immediately after police launched their first early morning assault on May 30, crowds from other Istanbul neighborhoods showed up at Taksim Square in their thousands, even though all public transport routes had been shut down. In many cities large-scale demonstrations involved people from various walks of life: young, old, socialists, liberals, anti-capitalist Muslims, Turkish and Kurdish nationalists, gay and lesbian rights advocates as well as the supporters of Istanbul's three major football teams(Ankur, 2014). At 9 p.m. daily, many different groups showed their support in a range of ways: people with very young and elderly relatives joined demonstration marches in their communities and others expressed their protest from balconies by banging pots and bans. By mid-June, international support was growing, particularly among areas of Europe with strong Turkish communities. This support was expressed through social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, but also through public gatherings and protest marches (Ankur, 2014).

2.2. The role of (social) media and cyber-activism in social movements

High profile political actions during the 'Arab Spring' revolutions as well as the recent Taksim Gezi Park movement in Turkey have led media scholars to focus on the role of online social media in political mobilization and mass social change (see for example (Stepanova, 2011; Howard and Hussain, 2011; Gerbaudo, 2012; Lim, 2012; Corke et al., 2014).

Responses to the rapid surge in protests and the roles played by digital media in various types of mass movements have divided critics into opposing camps. On the one hand, there are those who welcome online communication platforms as liberating forces; on the other hand, there are those who see them as tools increasingly used by state authorities to identify, locate, and silence individuals and groups opposing the establishment (Bennet and Segerberg, 2012). Thus 'cyber-skeptics' view the favorable impact of online social media as overstated, saying that they have not successfully realized their predicted potential in terms of organized activity and individual participation in mass movements (Gladwell, 2010). And 'cyber-utopians' argue that online social media can indeed help to initiate and promote collective actions and act as a means of organization, amplifying a movement's message and its international impact (Jones, 2011; Coenen et al., 2012).

Bennett and Segerberg, (2012) have developed the concept of 'connective action' as distinct from classic 'collective action' to account for the new dynamics

evident in organizational structures and for different forms of mobilization, all of which are entirely dependent on modern communication methods. Some of the key distinctive features of connective action are that activists use a combination of social media and real world actions, like meetings, protests, and key location occupations, to maintain and build momentum. For many such activists, this is their first time participating in such political or social movements; developments in technology and online communication allow disparate and unaffiliated groups and individuals to communicate and distribute information without the necessity of belonging to organizations such as political parties or labor unions, for instance (Bennett and Segerberg, 2012).

The Gezi Park protests came to symbolize the pivotal role that social media can play in mobilizing people and organizing civil protests. The conspicuous absence of any coverage of these events by news outlets emphasized the importance of social media in recording and publicizing the movement. It also served to extend the outreach to others opposing the policies of civil authorities, the established media, and their corporate associates (Atak, 2013). Social media was integral to the development of the movement that arose out of the Gezi Park protests; it provided a foundation from which participants could organize events and coordinate actions, and from which more formal groups developed. All of this increased the movement's cohesion and integrity, and helped awareness and support of cause to spread internationally (Tufekci et al., 2014).

A key aspect of the role of social media in the Gezi Park protests was that it facilitated the spread of information internationally about the protest in Turkey and fostered support against the Turkish government. In the face of the media's refusal to cover the Gezi movement, Turkish nationals abroad were driven to organize events to raise awareness and to demonstrate their support for their fellow nationals at home. Activists in the diaspora were helpful in spreading information, supplying encouragement, and shaping the global perception of the Gezi uprising. The diaspora activists served as liaisons, transmitting information between those directly involved in the movement and the international news media, and they became involved in protests by amplifying the voices of local protesters in the outside world. They bridged the gap between social media and mainstream media, and collaborated actively with members of the news media, assisting with the linguistic and cultural translation of documents and messages for international audiences (Andén-Papadopoulos and Pantti, 2013).

The Gezi Park movement has thus given rise to novel media uses in Turkey: the Gezi Park revolt was one of the first to make such substantial use of social media (Twitter, Facebook, blogs), and never before had a protest moment been able to control events to this extent or have their demands acknowledged in this way. The surge in viewing figures and readership numbers for anti-establishment broadcasts and print media in reaction to the attitude of the pro-Government media outlets was striking (Gezgin et al.,2014). The most remarkable and unprecedented features of the Gezi Park movement was the enormous increase in tweets and Twitter users during the events at Gezi Park: 384,000 people joined Twitter every month in 2012; new users reached 660,000 in June 2013; and in the aftermath of the movement about 500,000 accounts were created per month (Kesen, 2014; Turkoglu and Caren, 2014).

Unquestionably, social media platforms have been a way for citizens to reach out and secure assistance and support for their movement, whether through connecting with human rights groups or motivating the wider public to participate (Tung, 2011). However, the benefits of turning to social media for political purposes are not limited to those advocating for human rights or the civil good. The effectiveness and influence of social media during such events are integrally linked to the specific social and political context in which they are occurring (El-Nawawy and Khamis, 2014). Social media provide venues for strategies for anti-establishment movements but also for state authorities. State agents use social media platforms for information gathering and monitoring, and other groups against the movement in question also maintain an active presence there.

2.3. How are social media shaping social capital?

Scholars have looked at social media as a way of facilitating the increase of social capital by individuals. Social capital is an ambiguous, multidimensional concept whose definition has varied considerably and, as yet, no precise consensus has been reached regarding what it represents (Bourdieu, 1980; Coleman, 1988). Putnam (2000) argues that ‘civicness’ or the perception of civic engagement is central to the meaning of social capital. He describes social capital as a network that exists between members of the community, which allows individuals to forgo personal priorities and to work as a group towards shared objectives and common goals. Putnam (2000) identifies two types of social capital: ‘bonding capital’ and ‘bridging capital’. Bonding capital describes ‘inward networks that tend to reinforce exclusive identities and homogeneous groups’, while bridging capital signifies open networks

that are ‘outward looking and encompass people across diverse social cleavages’. Bonding capital consists of strong ties that are also referred to as protection networks and these are a source of unstructured social support; bridging capital consists of weak ties that underlie innovation networks essential for social and professional progression and for expanding the range of available information (Granovetter, 1973; Barr, 1998; Putnam, 2000). This distinction is important as it provides a more accurate understanding of the social impact of communication through social media platforms and the Internet.

Further, Brinkerhoff (2009) argues that online communication networks connect outlying populations to more densely populated centers. This makes it possible for widespread groups to establish unity and for each group to speak on behalf of the larger movement. The Internet can be used to monitor progress and accomplishments, sustaining engaged participation and encouraging additional recruitment. Essentially, the Internet provides a structured foundation for organization and communication. As well as effectively disseminating information, this foundation increases the perceived magnitude and influence of the movement. It also connects a wide range of interested groups despite regional and social boundaries, resulting in the cohesion of disparate elements into a substantial body of social capital, or at least that is the hope.

It is enlightening to account for bridging and bonding differences as well as for online and offline dissimilarities, especially when the range offered by the Internet is quite encompassing. Williams (2006) argues that conflicting views of the impact of social media and the Internet on building social capital result from a failure to distinguish between online and offline social capital. According to Williams (2006), the majority of the research demonstrating the detrimental impact of Internet usage on social capital concerns the bonding of social capital offline. However, Internet use can also result in the accumulation of additional social capital (Ellison et al., 2011; Hofer and Aubert, 2013): through the Internet, it is possible to establish connections between activists who have never met in person. In other words, new networks can be created through the Internet, thus producing online bridging social capital.

Unsurprisingly, the role of social media in political participation and the development of social movements is currently a hot topic in academic circles. Through an offline and online survey in three European countries, this study will contribute to the literature by focusing on the role of mainstream and social media platforms in a social movement from a diasporic engagement perspective, as well as

their role in instigating, covering and organizing the Taksim Gezi Park movement abroad. Building on the literature on social movements, their description based on Tilly's WUNC model, the use of social media for political mobilization purposes, and the role of social media in social capital building, this study aims to assess the positions of the Turkish diaspora in Western Europe (from solidarity to indifference) with respect to the Gezi Park protest movement in terms of their use of mainstream and social media, their (cyber) activism or lack thereof, and their building of social capital through social media.

This leads us to the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the profiles of the pro-Gezi and anti-Gezi members of the Turkish diaspora in Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands?

RQ2: How have diaspora members made use of traditional and social media before and during the Gezi Park protests?

RQ3: What kinds of social relations have emerged as a result of the Gezi Park protests?

RQ4: What kinds of social activities have emerged as a result of the Gezi Park protests?

3. Methodology

This study is part of a bigger research project dealing with the roles of network structure and dynamics in social capital building among Turkish diasporic members. This study visualizes online and offline networks of these phenomena in three European countries. The research is divided into four studies and a multi-method approach is proposed. For data collection, a multi-step process is employed that begins with offline and online surveys to locate the target population and collects their online network information via their twitter accounts. Large-scale user network and profile data collection are used to map the target population's online networks and discover the structural and relational attributes of their networks, measuring the role of influential people via their positions (as hubs and bridges) in the networks and the number of retweets. Following that, in-depth interviews are conducted with key players to understand their motivations and experiences while tweeting during the Gezi protests, with an attempt to gauge its effect on social networks and building social capital by mapping their offline personal networks.

Our research mainly focused on the use of both traditional media and social media platforms by the Turkish and Kurdish diaspora, their attitudes and behaviors regarding the Gezi Park protests, and the role of the protests in their social capital building activities (maintaining social relations and undertaking social activities in their countries of residence and Turkey). Given the lack of reliable and comprehensive statistics our main challenge was to locate members of the Turkish diaspora (i.e. first generation immigrants of Kurdish/Turkish origin, their descendants, students) offline as well as online. The snowball sampling method was used to gather our respondents, who completed the survey in one of four language versions: offline data collection occurred in Turkish neighborhoods and at meetings and social gatherings of Turkish organizations, while online data collection was carried out through Qualtrics links on Facebook group pages and ethnic organizations websites.

The self-administered questionnaires were run both online and offline and included 64 open- and closed-ended questions intended to measure aspects such as traditional media use and social media use, the role of social media in the Gezi protests, and the impact of the Gezi Park movement on the respondents' social relations and activities after the protests. The main survey after pretests began in November 2013, with data from 967 respondents being collected until the end of May 2014. The results of this study show that the respondents were not likely to be first generation diaspora members—and in fact more likely to be second or third generation many of whom remained in the country upon completion of studies.. The number of respondents was almost the same in the three countries under scrutiny (n= 332 (34.3%) in Belgium; n= 315 (32.6%) in the Netherlands, and n=320 (33.1%) in Germany).

Various variables were used to measure, quantify and test the research questions. *Socio-demographic characteristics* such as gender, age, occupational status, marital status, educational level, number of years spent living in Europe, language used daily to speak with family, and sense of belonging to religion were used to describe the respondents' general profiles. The *attitude* of the respondents towards the Gezi Park movement was measured through a variable based on participation in the protests on social media and in other ways. The *social media use profile* was measured through different variables related to the use of traditional and social media before and during the Gezi Park protests.

Social relations and activities before and during the Gezi Park movement were measured through variables related to either the decline or increase of the diaspora's

formal and informal social relations and activities before and during the protests. The survey included several questions meant to find out whether there had been an increase in the respondents' face-to-face and online relationships with Turkey, with people from Turkey living in Europe, and with their host society and country. Additionally, as a way to test the impact of the Gezi Park movement on their social ties and social capital, we asked respondents whether they had joined any new organization and whether their activities in Turkish organizations had increased in the aftermath of the protests.

Finally, univariate and bivariate statistical analyses were run to understand the composition as well as the between-group comparison of the sample, and to identify relevant correlations between the variables under study.

4. Research findings

4.1. Profile of the Turkish diaspora

We expected pro- and anti-Gezi respondents to show varying demographic profiles. However, while the former were thought to be left-leaning, not particularly religious youths who opposed the AKP politics (KONDA Research Consultancy, 2014), the demographics of the two groups closely resembled each other, with only a few striking differences, faith being the most prominent (see Table 1). One in three (30.5%) of the respondents indicated being in opposition to the movement, while 16.8% were passive and 49.3% active supporters. Men were more likely to be opponents or passive supporters, with women tending towards the more active end of the spectrum.

Table 1 about here

Our respondents ranged from 17 to 75 years of age (mean age 31), with the largest group aged 20 to 29 (45.1%). Anti- and pro-Gezi groups differed significantly in as much as the average age of the anti-Gezi group (28%) was lower than that of the passive (32%) or active (33%) pro-Gezi groups. Three in four respondents (73.7%) were college graduates. Almost half were employed (44.9%). There were significant

between-group differences given that 59% of the Gezi opponents were students, alongside 33.1% employed respondents. By way of comparison, one in two Gezi supporters (52%) were employed, followed by students (42.1%). There were more Gezi opponents (42.8%) in the Netherlands than in Belgium (29.0%) and Germany (28.8%) among our respondents. The group of active supporters was higher in Germany (38.6%) than in Belgium (34.2%) and in the Netherlands (27.3%), with 44% of the passive supporters living in Belgium.

Our respondents' average number of years spent in Europe is 21 years. The figure is higher for the anti-Gezi group (23.5 years on average) than for the passive (21 years) and active supporters (19 years on average). As expected, the Turkish and Kurdish languages (66.4%) are dominant languages spoken at home, with only 3.3% of the respondents using the language of the country of residence in the domestic sphere. Active (74.3%) and passive Gezi supporters (65.2%) seem to speak Turkish or Kurdish more often than Gezi opponents (52.2%).

With respect to faith, 64.4% reported a sense of belonging to a religion, while 29% percent were uncertain and only 7% said they were not at all religious. There was clear heterogeneity amongst groups, as the anti-Gezi group (94.5%) and the passive pro-Gezi group (72.9%) were more likely to refer to Muslim affiliation, compared to the active supporters who indicated adherence to either some faith (44.3%), or exhibiting no certainty (46.4%) about it.

4.2. Social media use

Coming to the core focus of our study, we also found notable differences in specific media use among pro-and anti-Gezi respondents (Table 2). Gezi opponents used the Internet (Tau C=.07; p=.02) and watched both Turkish television (r=.28; p=.000) and European-based television (r=.20; p=.01) more frequently than did Gezi supporters. Furthermore, both groups turned to different social media to keep abreast of the Gezi Park protests: the pro-Gezi protesters used Facebook (r=.21; p=.000) and Twitter (r=.20; p=.000) more often, and they also preferred online newspapers, while the anti-Gezi group (r=.08; p=.04) favored television news (r=.19; p=.000).

Table 2 about here

4.3. Perceived credibility of Turkish and European media coverage

Previous research has shown that Turkish media censorship was one of the main drivers of the Gezi Park movement (Tunç, 2014). Criticisms began on the first night of clashes between protestors and police, when CNN-Turk aired a documentary about penguins while battles raged in the streets. We asked respondents about their opinion of the coverage of the Gezi Park movement by the Turkish and European media. Unsurprisingly, the pro-Gezi group found more bias in the Turkish media (58.4% vs. 35.2%). Considerably more Gezi opponents saw the media as reliable and objective compared to the Gezi protesters (25.3% vs. 2.2%). With respect to the European media coverage, 78.5% of Gezi opponents found European media to be biased, compared to only 13.7% of the Gezi supporters, who found the European media to be more trustworthy.

Table 3 about here

Approximately half of the respondents (50.8%) reported hearing about the Gezi Park protests for the first time on May 27 when the bulldozers rolled into the park to clear its trees. One in four (23.3%) became aware of the incidents on May 28th after the police intervention. The rest learnt about it later, in the aftermath of the Prime Minister's speech and the harsh police repression, extensively covered by the Western media.

Figure 1 about here

4.4. Types of social relations and activities that emerged from the Gezi Park Protests

Table 5b shows the differences between Gezi supporters and opponents with respect to their accruing social capital, as exemplified with questions inquiring into their social relations and activities. Overall, significantly different between-group profiles emerged, with the exception of the question on increased attendance in

meetings of associations in which respondents were members. More concretely, Gezi supporters (71.5%) encouraged people to participate in the Gezi Park protests through social media, an activity in which opponents did not engage. Unsurprisingly, Gezi opponents did not call on people to take part in the protests either in person or otherwise. The pro-Gezi group comprised of people (43.3%) who actively sent out invitations, and of people (25.2%) who were hesitant in inviting people to participate in the Gezi park protests in person or by phone. The pro-Gezi group also had a significant number of members (38.2%) who participated in offline forums along with the protests. The survey asked respondents whether they had removed friends who did not support the protests from their online social media accounts. Although both groups generally denied this, a fair number (25.4%) of Gezi supporters answered the question in the affirmative. Clearly, most of the Gezi supporters (54.1%) felt that their connections with Turkey had increased during the protests; the opponents who mainly disagreed obviously did not feel this. Similar results for Gezi supporters (49.5%) were observed when respondents were asked if their connections with people from Turkey and with Turks living in Europe had increased during the protests; again the opponents did not feel that connections increased. Compared to Gezi opponents (27.3%), more supporters (37.0%) acknowledged having experienced more face-to-face interactions with people from Turkey living in Europe than with people of non-Turkish origin. Overall, the answering pattern to most of our questions demonstrates that Gezi supporters were greatly active in accruing bonding social capital and social relations among Turkish diasporic members under the banner of the Gezi park protests, a trend that was absent among the opponents of the protests. The opponents of the Gezi protests showed little indication in accruing bonding social capital, as they seemed to not be influenced by the Gezi park protests the way the supporters were influenced.

The results obtained from both the t-test and the Mann-Whitney test point to similar results in terms of significant differences between the pro-Gezi and the anti-Gezi groups when referring to building social capital and establishing social relations. For all the questions, except the one pertaining to attendance in the meetings of organizations, the mean rank of the pro-Gezi group is higher than that of the anti-Gezi group. The high U-values provided in the table along with the corresponding significant P-values suggest that the pro-Gezi group was more involved in social capital bridging and promoting social relations than their opponents. Unsurprisingly, the opponents disagreed with being involved in any attempt to intensify their social

bridging capital and relations by reaching out to other members in the diaspora during the Gezi park protests.

Table 4a about here

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5. Discussion and Conclusion

The researchers had the incredible luck to witness the events in person, which allowed them to carry out research on the involvement of Turkish diasporic activism in political changes in 'the old country'. This chapter took up the international response to a protest movement's diffusion across three countries among their Turkish diasporic community, focusing on the role of mainstream media coverage as well as on the mediated and unmediated connections of Turkish diasporic members with their 'home' country at a disruptive moment like the Gezi Park protest movement, susceptible to change existing attitudes and affinities with the 'home' and 'receiving' societies.

The societal background of this study is the assimilationist policy discourse, which currently tends to dominate in the three countries under study, paralleled with the mutual perception of a widening of cultural distance between the majority and ethnic-cultural minorities. However, the active age groups in both the majority and minority population show striking similarities in terms of education, views and expectations on almost every life domain, with the exception of faith-related issues. Faith also proved to be a distinguishing feature within our research group. Against these integration politics and demographic realities, this chapter, dealing with a crisis moment, identified a re-bonding social capital trend among the Gezi protesters as members of the European diaspora with Turkish people living in Europe and Turks in Turkey.

In a nutshell, our results pointed in the following directions: Gezi protests supporters socio-demographically comprised mainly people who had spent a far lesser amount of time living in their corresponding EU nations compared to opponents, which mainly comprised people having lived for more than 20 years in the EU nation. The pro-Gezi supporters dominantly speak Turkish or Kurdish at home, whilst the opponents also speak Dutch, French and German. These stark differences indicate that

most of the opponents within the diaspora are those who have spent large parts of their lives in the EU nation and have integrated into the culture as the local language proves to be the main language spoken at home and this just might be an indication of distancing themselves from the Turkish language. Overall, although opponents are most prominent in our Dutch subgroup, passive pro-Gezi supporters make up the majority of our Belgian subsample and active pro-Gezi supporters are the most prominent in our German subgroup.

In terms of social media use, the use of online outlets was quite prominent among the Gezi protestors, which also increased significantly during the Gezi protests. They heard about Gezi mainly through social media while the opponents relied on television. Interestingly, opponents watched more Turkish as well as European Television than the Gezi supporters did. Opponents, in contrast to supporters, also read offline and online European newspapers. This gives further evidence to the proposition that the opponents mainly comprised of people integrated in the cultures of their respective host EU nations.

As to the accruing of social capital looking at the building of social relations and the undertaking of social activities, our study found out that pro-Gezi supporters had a strong attachment to Turkey in terms of the socio-political situation that was a result of the Gezi protests. A fair number of supporters participated in spreading awareness about the Gezi protests, engaged in meetings that increased after the protests, and some even cut off contact from social media friends who did not support the protests. The majority of opponents did not participate in any activity pertaining to social capital building due to the Gezi protests. Hence, the opponents of the Gezi protests are mostly young people who have acclimatized into European culture and have been less affected by the Gezi park protests. The Gezi protest supporters comprise people who are generally engrossed in online social activities and have voiced heavily over the Gezi park protests.

These notions boil down to the theory of "connective actions" as discussed earlier by Bennett and Segerberg who distinguished these from the classic "collective actions". They further go on to mention the role of technology in enabling actors to share cognitive resources and later circulate them across trusted social networks without having to address formal conventional groups such as political parties and labor unions (Bennet and Segerberg, 2012). The aforementioned theories are observed through the use of social media platforms by key players using and further extending their social networks as well as bridging and bonding with peer players.

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Table 1
Profiles of the Supporters and Opponents of the Gezi Park Protests in diaspora

Characteristics	Total %	Opponent%	Passive support%	Active support%	Test / Sig
Gender					
Female	46.8	43.4	38.3	52.2	$X^2 = 11.678$
Male	53.8	56.6	61.7	47.8	P< 0.003
Age					
¯ 20	10.4	15.8	11.3	6.8	$X^2 = 44.739$
20-29	45.1	51.9	42.1	41.9	P< 0.000
30-39	24.0	18.9	25.2	26.8	
40-49	11.8	10.7	8.2	13.8	
50+	8.6	2.7	13.2	10.6	
Mean	31	28	32	33	
Marital Status	37.9	35.9	37.7	39.2	$X^2 = 0.834$
Single	62.1	64.1	62.3	60.8	P< 0.659
Married					
Occupation Status					
Employed	44.9	34.3	42.5	52.0	$X^2 = 22.515$
Unemployed	7.3	6.7	10.4	6.5	P< 0.000
Student	47.9	59.0	47.0	41.5	

Level of Education					
Primary school or less	2.1	1.4	3.1	2.3	$X^2 = 50.741$
High school or less	9.0	9.2	11.7	8.0	P< 0.000
Completed high School	15.1	18.6	14.2	13.2	
Undergraduate Degree or less	35.2	42.0	38.3	30.0	
Master's Degree or less	29.1	25.8	28.4	31.4	
Ph.D. degree or less	9.4	3.1	4.3	15.1	
Country of Living					
Belgium	34.4	29.2	44.4	34.2	$X^2 = 27.911$
The Netherlands	32.1	42.0	28.4	27.3	P< 0.000
Germany	33.5	28.8	27.2	38.6	
Length of Stay					
5 years and less	18.1	2.7	16.8	28.1	$X^2 = 107.404$
6-10	8.6	4.8	9.3	10.8	P< 0.000
11-20	18.6	21.3	19.3	16.7	
21-30	36.7	53.3	34.2	27.4	
Higher than 30	17.9	17.9	20.5	17.1	
Mean	21	23	21	19	
Languages					
Turkish or Kurdish	66.4	52.2	65.2	74.3	$X^2 = 77.473$
Turkish + Dutch, French and German	30.3	47.3	27.0	22.3	P< 0.000
German, Dutch, French, English	3.3	0.5	7.8	3.4	
Sense of Belonging to religion					
Yes	64.4	94.5	72.9	44.3	$X^2 = 400.758$
No	7.0	2.0	9.0	9.3	P< 0.000
Uncertain	28.6	3.6	18.1	46.4	
Total(N)	934	295	162	477	

Table 2
Media Use Profiles

	Anti-Gezi %	Pro-Gezi %	Test Significance
Internet Use Frequently			r=.80
All/most of the time	68.1	63.8	P< 0.000
Have a twitter account			
Yes	63.1	60.9	Phi=.021
No	36.9	39.1	n.s.
Where they first heard about Gezi			
Facebook	31.4	46.7	
Twitter	7.1	8.5	Tau C=.23
TV	44.1	17.4	P< 0.000
Turkish Newspaper Reading Online/Offline			r=.20
Every day/Nearly Every Day	54.8	36.3	P<.000
European Newspaper Reading Online/Offline			r=.08
Every day/Nearly Every Day	56.2	44.7	P< .007
Turkish Television Viewing			r=28
Several hours/ day	64.3	37.8	P<.007

European Television Viewing			r=.20
Several hours/ day	54.8	36.3	P<.000
News Channel of Choice			
Turkish/Non-Turkish/Both	34.4	36.1	Turkish - n.s.
Use of Social Media			V =.204
Most of time	35.1	53.4	P<.000
Use of Traditional Media			
Most of time	43.6	43.2	n.s.
Where they follow news of Gezi (All of the time/most of the time)			
Facebook	78.4	90.0	r=.21 P<.000
Twitter	41.8	55.9	r=.20 P<.000
Newspaper	51.7	54.9	r=.08 P<.04
TV	82.5	59.2	r=.19 P<.000
Increase During Gezi of Online Media Us			
Facebook	33.4	77.1	r=.40 P<.000
Twitter	27.6	53.6	r=.28 P<.000
Online Forums	34.8	77.1	r=.40 P<.000

Table 3
Opinion of Pro- and Anti-Gezi Respondents Related to Media Coverage of the Gezi Park Protests in Turkey and Europe

Media coverage	Total %	Anti-Gezi %	Pro-Gezi %
Turkish media			
Coverage is reliable and objective	9.5	25.3	2.2
Reporting is one-sided	51.1	35.2	58.4
Not all aspects of Gezi news included	19.7	30.4	14.8
Insufficient news of Gezi included	17.4	6.5	22.5
Don't follow Turkish press	2.4	2.7	2.2
		Phi &Cramer's V=.450	P< 0.000
European media			
Coverage is reliable and objective	26.8	1.7	38.4
Reporting is one-sided	34.2	78.5	13.7
Not all aspects of Gezi news included	24.0	14.3	28.4
Insufficient news of Gezi included	12.4	2.4	17.1
Don't follow Turkish press	2.6	3.1	2.4
		Phi &Cramer's V=.450	P< 0.000

Figure 1
When did one hear about the Gezi Park protests?

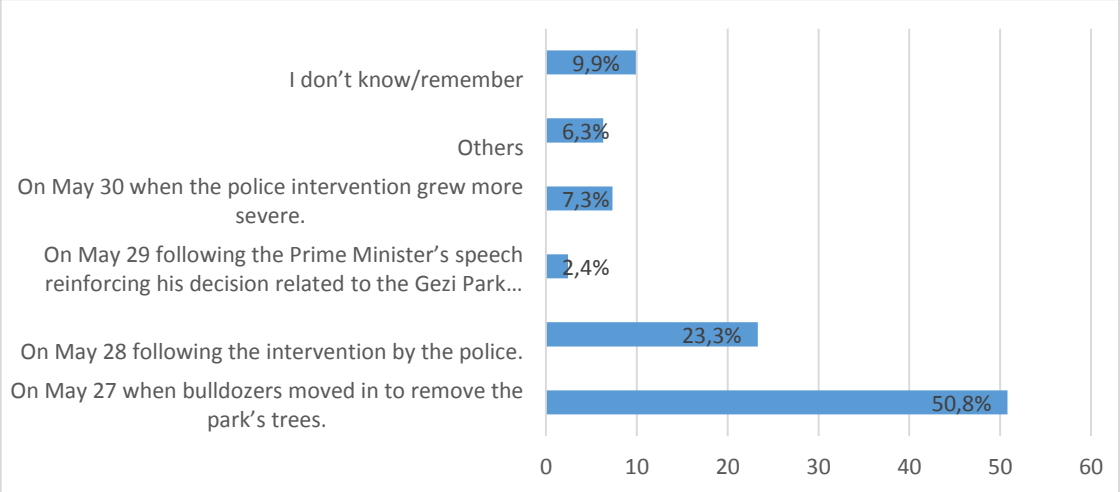

Table 4a.
Types of social activities and relations that emerged from the Gezi Park Protests

Social Capital	Total Mean	Anti-Gezi Mean	Pro-Gezi Mean	Anti-Gezi Mean Rank	Pro-Gezi Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U Test	T-Test
Social activities							
I encouraged people to participate in the Gezi Park protests through social media	3.12	2.21	3.57	212.21	560.93	U= 155,549 P< 0.000	F= 92.534 P< 0.000
I invited others to participate in the protests in person or by telephone.	2.80	2.19	3.12	270.96	522.31	U= 133,390 P< 0.000	F= 258.016 P< 0.000
I participated in offline forums alongside with the protests	2.76	2.24	3.02	294.68	506.51	U=124,328 P< 0.000	F=155.061 P< 0.000
Social relations							
I removed friends who did not support the protests from my friend list on social media or I cut face-to-face contact	2.54	2.25	2.70	354.51	473.87	U=105,696 P< 0.000	F=218.553 P< 0.000
My connections with Turkey	3.08	2.61	3.33	306.50	501.80	U=121,259	F=0.947

have increased during the Gezi Park protests.						P< 0.000	P< 0.000
My connections with people from Turkey living in Europe have increased during the protests.	3.02	2.56	3.27	305.06	505.92	U=123,062 P< 0.000	F=9.619 P< 0.000
In my daily life, I have face-to-face interactions with people from Turkey living in Europe more than with others.	2.98	2.82	3.07	390.37	463.44	U=98,172 P< 0.000	F=3.493 P< 0.000
In my daily life I have face-to-face interactions with those who are native to the country where I live more than with those of Turkish/Kurdish Origin	3.06	2.77	3.21	345.71	475.89	U=106,660 P< 0.000	F=2.495 P< 0.000
1= Strongly disagree	2= Disagree		3= Neither agree nor disagree		4= Agree		5= Strongly Agree
Formal ties During the Gezi park protests, have you attended the meetings of associations, that you are a member of, more than you did before.	1.63	1.49	1.70	437.82	458.61	U=92,465 P< 0.201	F=44.479 P< 0.000
1= I am not a member of any association.	2= No, it has not changed.		3= Yes, I joined an association.			4= Yes, it has increased.	

Table 4b.
Types of social activities and relations that emerged from the Gezi Park Protests

Social capital		**Total%**	**Anti–Gezi%**	**Pro-Gezi%**
Social activities				
I encouraged people to participate in the Gezi Park protests through social media	Agree	50.1	3.9	71.5
	Neither agree/disagree	13.9	13.3	14.1
	Disagree	36.0	82.8	14.3
			X^2 =431.961	P< 0.000
I invited others to participate	Agree	30.5	3.9	43.3

in the protests in person or by telephone	Neither agree/disagree	20.8	11.6	25.2
	Disagree	48.7	84.6	31.5
			X^2 =226.603	P< 0.000
I participated in offline forums alongside with the protests.	Agree	27.3	4.6	38.2
	Neither agree /disagree	21.8	14.8	25.2
	Disagree	50.9	80.6	24.8
			X^2 =161.000	P< 0.000
Social relations				
I removed friends who did not support the protests from my friend list on social media or I cut face-to-face contact.	Agree	19.0	5.7	25.4
	Neither agree/disagree	17.0	13.4	18.8
	Disagree	64.0	80.9	55.8
			X^2 =61.331	P< 0.000
My connections with Turkey have increased during the Gezi Park protests.	Agree	42.8	18.8	54.1
	Neither agree/disagree	23.9	23.0	24.4
	Disagree	33.3	58.2	21.5
			X^2 =133.125	P< 0.000
My connections with people from turkey living in Europe have increased during the protests.	Agree	38.2	13.9	49.5
	Neither agree/disagree	27.7	27.8	27.7
	Disagree	34.1	58.4	22.8
			X^2 =134.946	P< 0.000
In my daily life, I have face-to-face interactions with people from turkey living in Europe more than with others.	Agree	33.9	27.3	37.0
	Neither agree/disagree	31.3	27.3	33.2
	Disagree	34.8	45.4	29.8
			X^2 =20.778	P< 0.000
In my daily life I have face-to-face interactions with those who are native to the country where I live more than with those of Turkish.	Agree	35.5	22.2	41.5
	Neither agree/disagree	36.2	32.2	38.1
	Disagree	28.5	45.5	20.4
			X^2 =63.579	P< 0.000
Formal ties				
During the Gezi park protests, have you attended the meetings of associations, that you are a member of, more than you did before.	Yes, it has increased	10.4	3.8	13.5
	No, it has not changed.	26.0	34.5	22.1
	Yes, I joined an association.	3.1	1.4	3.9
	I am not a member of any association.	60.5	60.3	60.6
			X^2 =33.038	P< 0.000

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